

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
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October 16, 1985

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 1-78-85

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY COUNSELS

SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE TO PERMANENCY PLANNING OF LOCATING A DEPENDENT  
CHILD'S PARENTS

As the result of lengthy discussion with county welfare departments (CWDs) regarding the appropriate provision of child welfare services (CWS) to non-residing parents, it became apparent that there were additional related issues which needed to be addressed separately. This ACIN will provide CWDs with information that is critical to the success of the child's permanency planning outcome.

Several serious problems occur when children are removed from one parent and no serious efforts have been made to locate and provide services, where appropriate, to the other parent. These problems are:

- The child's reunification with an available non-residing parent is delayed, often for more than a year due to the delay in locating the parent and reunification with the non-residing parent becomes less likely as time elapses.
- Termination of parental rights actions are delayed because of the lack of efforts to locate and provide services to non-residing parents. Courts are reluctant to terminate rights of parents whom agencies have not made a serious effort to locate.
- Adoption resources are inappropriately diverted to locating parents and to provide family reunification services.

When a child is temporarily removed from the home of his/her parents(s), State statute requires the CWD to notify each parent of the time and place of the detention hearing (Welfare and Institutions Code Section 311). If one parent is not residing in the home from which the child was removed, every effort should be made to locate that parent as soon as possible. The success of any potential subsequent action to reunify the child with a parent or to free a child for adoption depends on having early contact with each parent. Immediate contact with the non-residing parent is important for the following reasons;

- CWD can consider the possibility of the child remaining with one of his/her parents.
- If appropriate, each parent can be provided with an opportunity to receive CWS.
- The parent's inability or unwillingness to utilize reunification services or to care for the child can provide documentation to support a future action to free the child for adoption.

For all the above considerations, we strongly urge CWD's to make diligent efforts to locate parents. CWD's have a number of resources available for use in conducting a parent search. Many adoption units routinely conduct parent searches and all the county District Attorneys have relevant information gathered through child support investigations.

Please direct any questions on this topic to your Adult and Family Services Operations Consultant, at (916) 445-0623.



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